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# NAPOLEON FALLEN

By

## ROBERT BUCHANAN

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# NAPOLEON FALLEN

# NAPOLEON FALLEN

A Lyrical Drama

By ROBERT BUCHANAN

STRAHAN & CO., PUBLISHERS
56 LUDGATE HILL, LONDON
1871

LONDON:
PRINTED BY VIRTUE AND CO.,
CITY ROAD.

## TO THE PROPHETS AND MARTYRS.

O Prophets ! that look forward, searching slow
The future time for signs, what see ye there ?
What far-off gleams of portent come and go ?
On what, with lips like quivering leaves, and hair
Back-blowing in the whirlwind, do ye stare
So steadfast and so still ? O speak, and tell—
Is the Soul safe ? Shall the sick world be well ?
Will morning glimmer soon, and all be fair ?
O Martyrs ! all ye see this day is sad,
And in your eyes there swim the fatal tears,
But on your brows the Dawn gleams cold and hoar.
I too gaze forward, and my heart grows glad—
I catch the comfort of the golden years—
I see the Soul is safe for evermore.

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# PREFATORY NOTE.

In reading this Napoleonic Play, or Lyrical Drama, or Dramatic Poem (I know not which is the fit title), it should be remembered that we lack as yet the proper foreground for the contemplation of the chief character. Fortunately, the subject, if treated with any ordinary skill, will be always gaining instead of losing that artistic distance which many think so necessary; while, on the other hand, it is likely to secure certain elements of real strength from the mere fact of its being based on contemporary events. Of course, it is more than ordinarily open to abuse, for ardent politicians who would let me have my own

way with Tiberius or Peter the Great, or even Bonaparte, are certain to rate me roundly if I disagree with them about Louis Napoleon.

The man who here soliloquises may not be the real Napoleon, but I believe there is some justification for my portrait. After all, truth is one thing, and dramatic truth is another. If my play possess verisimilitude, no critic has a right to object to it because he himself would have conceived the chief character differently.

One final word. I desire to say that I have nowhere in the following pages expressed my own political opinions.

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

# NAPOLEON FALLEN

οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως σε φῶ βεβουλεῦσθαι καλῶς·
κρεισσων γὰρ ἦσθα μηκέτ' ὢν ἢ ζῶν τυφλός.
* * * *
πάντα μὴ βούλου κρατεῖν·
καὶ γὰρ ἃ κρατήσας οὔ σοι τῷ βίῳ ξυνέσπετο.

SOPH. (ED. TYR.

## SPEAKERS.

NAPOLEON III. OF FRANCE.

AN OFFICER OF THE IMPERIAL STAFF.

A ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOP.

A PHYSICIAN.

MESSENGERS.

FIRST GERMAN CITIZEN.

SECOND GERMAN CITIZEN.

GERMAN CITIZEN'S WIFE.

CHORUS OF REPUBLICANS.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

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SCENE—*The Château of Wilhelmshöhe, in Cassel.*
TIME—1870, *shortly after the surrender of Sedan.*

*** There are certain obvious anachronisms in time. That the news of the fall of Rome and the proclamation of the French republic, only reaches Wilhelmshöhe about the same time as the news of the environment of Paris, is a dramatic expedient, necessary to the action of the drama, which begins at sunset and ends late the same night.

ERRATA.

Page 49, last line but one, *for* "Weissemberg," *read* "Weissenburg."

Page 51, line 1, *read*

"While Trochu, from the presidential seat,"

While russet trees to left and right
Snaring the rosy shafts of light
Shade them to silver, till they glow
There on the roof of the château
Gleaming bright ruby!

*Scene*—The Château of Wilhelmshöhe, in Cassel.

*German Citizens walking in the Gardens without.*

First Citizen.

How fine it is to lounge in talk
Together, down this long green walk:
While russet trees to left and right
Snaring the rosy shafts of light
Shade them to silver, till they glow
There on the roof of the château
Gleaming bright ruby!

SECOND CITIZEN.

Not too near—
The place is private.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Didst thou hear
The news? Another glorious blow
For Fatherland!

SECOND CITIZEN.

To-night at five
I saw the courier arrive,
Bringing the news to him who waits
Yonder.—O he may thank the fates
He sits so snug, the man of sin!—

How cunningly, before the end,
The Snake contrived to save his skin!

FIRST CITIZEN.

Thou art too hard upon him, friend.
He saw that all his cards were played,
And so, to save more bloodshed, strayed
Into the cage.

SECOND CITIZEN.

A cage, indeed!
Where from a gold plate he may feed
Of all earth's dainties, while afar
France, 'neath the tramping feet of War,
Bleeds like a winepress. There he lolls,
Butcher of bodies and of souls,
Smiling, and sees the storm blow by!

FIRST CITIZEN.

What could he do?

SECOND CITIZEN.

Could he not die?

FIRST CITIZEN.

Die? Sentiment! If I were he
I'd bless the stars which set me free
From that foul-hearted Whore's embrace,
France, with her fickle painted face.
Better in Germany to dine,
Smoke one's cigar, and sip one's wine;
And in good time, like most, no doubt,
Who have worn their wicked members out,
Repent, and be absolved, and then
Die in one's bed, like smaller men!

SECOND CITIZEN.

Thou cynic!

FIRST CITIZEN'S WIFE.

Dost thou think that he
Is happy?

FIRST CITIZEN.

Why not? . . Possibly,
My dear, 'tis something after all
To know the worst that can befall;
To know, whatever joy or sorrow
Fate is preparing for the morrow,
It cannot make more dark the lot
One bears to-night. Happy! Why not?
Happy as most of our poor kind.

WIFE.

He has so much upon his mind!

FIRST CITIZEN.

A woman's thought;—but hark to me,
And take this for philosophy—
Beyond a given amount of pain,
The spirit suffers not a grain.
What stuff we humble folk are taught
Of monarchs and their weight of thought!
Why, thou and I, and Jack and Jill,
Feel just as much of good and ill,
Of life and strife, of thought and care,
As he who sitteth musing there!

SECOND CITIZEN.

I saw him walking, yesterday.
He is much aged of late, they say—

He stoops much, and his features are
Gray like the ash of the cigar
He smokes for ever.

FIRST CITIZEN (*to* WIFE).

Come, my dear,
Let's home! 'Tis growing chilly here;
So!—take my arm. Yes, I contend
It matters little in the end
If one be beggar, priest, or king—
The whip's for all—the pang, the sting!
Dost thou remember—canst forget?
When all our goods were seized for debt,
In Friedberg? Claim was heap'd on claim—
Blow came on blow—shame follow'd shame;
And last, to crown our dire distress,
Thy brother Hans' hard-heartedness.
Think you *I* felt a whit less sad,
Less thunderstruck, less fierce, less mad,

Than yonder melancholy Man,
When, through the dark cloud of Sedan,
He, as a star that shoots by night,
Swept from his sphere of lonely light,
And at the feet of Wilhelm lay
Glow-worm-like, in the garish day
Of conquest? Well, well! wait and see—
I rose again, and so may he.
The world is but a play, tho' ye
Dear creatures take it seriously:
I cannot pity from my heart
The player of the Monarch's part,
For at the worst he never knows
The famish'd Body's bitter throes.
I pity more with all my soul
The filler of the Soldier's rôle,
Who feels the ball, and with a groan
Sinks in the bloody ranks unknown,

And while the far-off cannon cries,
Kisses his sweetheart's hair, and dies!

[*Exeunt.*

*Enter, within the Château,* NAPOLEON *and a* PHYSICIAN.

PHYSICIAN.

The sickness is no sickness of the flesh,
No ailment such as common mortals feel,
But spiritual; 'tis thy fiery thought
Drying the wholesome humour of the veins,
Consuming the brain's substance, and from thence,
As flame spreads, thro' each muscle, vein, and nerve,
Reaching the vital members. If your Highness

Could stoop from the tense strain of great affairs
To books and music, or such idle things
As wing the weary hours for lesser men!
Turn not thine eyes to France; receive no news;
Shut out the blinding gleam of battle; rest
From all fierce ache of thought; and for a time
Let the wild world go by.

NAPOLEON.

Enough, old friend:
Thine is most wholesome counsel. I will seek
To make this feverish mass of nerve and thew,
This thing of fretful heart-beats,

Fulfil its functions more mechanically.
Farewell.

PHYSICIAN.

Farewell, Sire. Brighter waking thoughts,
And sweeter dreams, attend thee! [*Exit.*

NAPOLEON.

All things change
Their summer livery for the autumn tinge
Of wind-blown withering leaves. That man is faithful,—
I have eat my life from his cold palm for years,
And I believe, so strong do use and wont
Fetter such natures, he would die to serve me;

Yet do I see in his familiar eyes
The fatal pain of pity. I have lain
At death's door divers times, and he hath slowly,
With subtle cunning and most confident skill,
Wooed back my breath, but never even then,
Tho' God's hand held me down, did he regard me
With so intense a gaze as now, when smitten
By the mail'd hand of man. I am not dead!
Not dying! only sick,—as all are sick
Who feel the mortal prison-house too weak
For the free play of Soul! I eat and drink—
I laugh—I weep, perchance—I feel—I think—
I still preserve all functions of a man—
Yet doth the free wind of the fickle world
Blow on me with as chilly a respect
As on a nameless grave. Is there so sad

A sunset on my face, that all beholding
Think only of the morrow?—other minds,
Other hearts, other hands? Almighty God,
If I dare pray Thee by that name of God,
Strengthen me! blow upon me with Thy breath!
Let one last memorable flash of fire
Burst from the blackening brand!—

Yes, sick—sick—sick;
Sick of the world; sick of the fitful fools
That I have played with; sick, forsooth, of breath,
Of thought, of hope, of Time. I staked my Soul
Against a Crown, and won. I wore the Crown,
And 'twas of burning fire. I staked my Crown

Against a Continent, and lost. I am here;
Fallen, unking'd, the shadow of a power,
Yet not heart-broken—no, not heart-broken—
But surely with more equable a pulse
Than when I sat on yonder lonely Seat
Fishing for wretched souls, and for my sport,
Although the bait was glorious gifts of earth,
Hooking the basest only. I am nearer
To the world's heart than then: 'tis bitter bread,
Most bitter, yea, most bitter; yet I eat
More freely, and sleep safer. I could die now:
And yet I dare not die.
Maker of men!
Thou Wind before whose strange breath we are clouds
Driving and changing!—Thou who dost abide

While all the crowns on all the heads of kings
Wither as wreaths of snow!—Thou Voice that dwellest
In the high sleeping chambers of the great,
When council and the feverish pomp are hush'd,
And the dim lamp burns low, and at its side
The sleeping potion in a cup of gold:—
Hear me, O God, in this my travail hour!
From first to last, Thou knowest—yea, Thou knowest—
I have been a man of peace: a silent man,
Thought-loving, most ambitious to appease
Self-chiding fears of mental littleness,
A builder in the dark of temples fair
Where men might meet together not for praise,
A planner of delights for simple men—

In all, a man of peace. I struck one blow,
And saw my hands were bloody; from that hour
I knew myself too delicately wrought
For crimson pageants; yea, the sight of pain
Sicken'd me like a woman. Day and night
I felt that stain on my immortal soul,
And gloved it from the world, and diligently
Wrought the red sword of empire to a scythe
For the swart hands of husbandmen to reap
Abundant harvest.—Nay, but hear me swear,
I never dreamed such human harvests blest
As spring from that red rain which pours this day
On the fair fields I sowed. Never, O God,
Was I a warrior or a thing of blood;
Always a man of peace:—in mine ambition
Peace-seeking, peace-engendering;—till that day

I saw the half-unloosen'd hounds of War
Yelp on the chain, and gnash their bloody teeth,
Ready to rend mine unoffending Child,
In whose weak hand the mimic toy of empire
Trembled to fall. Then feverishly I wrought
A weapon in the dark to smite those hounds
From mine imperial seat; and as I wrought
One of the fiends that came of old to Cain
Found me, and since I thirsted gave to me
A philtre, and in idiocy I drank:
When suddenly I heard as in a dream
Trumpets around me silver-tongued, and saw
The many-colour'd banners gleam i' the sun
Above the crying legions, and I rode
Royal before them, drunk with light and power,
My boy beside me blooming like a rose

To see the glorious show. Yet God, my God,
Even then I swear the hideous lust of life
Was far from me and mine; nay, I rode forth,
As to a gay review at break of day,
A student dazzled with the golden glare,
Half conscious of the cries of those he ruled,
Half brooding o'er the book that he had left
Open within his chamber. "Blood may flow,"
I thought, "a little blood—a few poor drops,—
A few poor drops of blood: but they shall
prove
Pearls of great price to buy my people peace;
The hounds of War shall turn from our fair
fields,
The cannon shall become a trump of praise,
And on my son a robe like this I wear
Shall fall, and make him royal for all time!"
O fool, fool, fool! What was I but a child,
Pleased beyond understanding with a toy,

Till in mine ears the scream of murther'd
France
Rang like a knell. I had slain my best
beloved!
The curse of blood was on mine hands
again!
My gentle boy, with wild affrighted gaze,
Turn'd from his sire, and moaned; the hounds
of War
Scream'd round me, glaring with their pitiless
eyes
Innumerable as the eyes of heaven;
I felt the sob of the world's woe; I saw
The fiery rain fill all the innocent air;
And, feeble as a maid who hides her face
In terror at a sword flash, conscience-struck,
Sick, stupefied, appalled, and all alone,
I totter'd, grasped the empty air,—and
fell!

## CHORUS.

### Strophe I.

Ah woe! ah woe!
How art thou fallen, Man of Mysteries!
Is this the face, are these the subtle eyes,
Kings sought in vain to fathom, and to know?
O Man of Mysteries,
O thou whom men deem'd wise,
Call not on God this day—His hand hath struck thee low.

### Anti-Strophe I.

Call not on God, but listen.
Yea, with thy soul's ears, listen! The earth groans,

The thunder roars, swords flash, blue lightnings glisten!
Hark! those are human moans!
List! the sharp rattle of the fiery hail,
The splashing rain of blood! Dost thou turn pale?
Who wrought this? who atones?
What, *thou* the people's Shepherd? Look, and see:
Thy fields are darken'd with a blood-black pall;
Thy farms are ruinous; in the granary,
Where golden wheat should be,
The wounded lambs are gather'd as they fall.
O Man of Mysteries,
Hearken unto their cries;—
Call not on God this day—'tis now too late to call.

## Strophe II.

Yet, if thou darest, pray. Thou canst not tell
How prayer may bring thee gain;—
And with thy prayer say thou these words as well:—
"Soon falls the house mark'd with the cross of Cain!"
O man, with secret hands thou didst prepare
A Pleasure-house most rare,
A beauteous Temple magically built,
So that thy people gladden'd unaware
And wandering therein forgot thy guilt,
And drank the amorous ditties woven there
To lutes of lechers and their lemans fair;
And all glad things were welcome in thy sight
Save the glad air of heaven; all things bright

Save the bright light of day; and all things
sweet
Save country-featured Truth and Honesty:
All these thou didst abolish from thy Seat,
Because these things were free.
Thou call on God this day—
Thou call to the Most High—
Who asked Hell's blessing then, and let
God's gifts go by!

ANTI-STROPHE II.

Pray yet, and heark. This Temple where thy
name
Was fluted forth by silver choirs of Fame,
This Pleasure-house of nations, this abode
Of strange enchantments, in due time became
An outrage and a shame,
Abominable in the eyes of God;

For all the beauteous things within the place
Were witchcraft: all its glory was a lie;
Not one true angel but perceived it base—
There was no gift of grace
But such as bawds may sell and gold can buy;
Nay, even Art and Music, each with face
Averted, passed in tears. Thereon a cry
Went up against thy marvellous work and thee
From the throats of all things free.
And o'er thy fields the desolating horde
Like to a swarm of locusts rose and spread!
The lightning of the Lord
Struck at thy glorious Temple, and it fled
Like vapour before sunlight! The green sod

Is bloody where it stood and fair feet trod.
Fallen with thee it lies,
And it shall ne'er arise.
How should God bless thy work? Thou did'st
not build to God.

*Enter a* BISHOP.

NAPOLEON.

Speak out thy tidings quickly,
How fares it with the Empress and my son?

BISHOP.

Well, Sire. They bid thee look thy fate in the
face,
And be of cheer.

NAPOLEON.

Where didst thou part with them?

BISHOP.

In England, Sire, where they have found a home
Among the frozen-blooded islanders
Who yesterday called blessings on thy brow,
And now rejoice in thy calamity.
Thus much thy mighty lady bade me say,
If I should find thee private in thy woe :—
With thy great name the streets are garrulous ;
Mart, theatre, and church, palace and prison,
Down to the very commons by the road
Where Egypt's bastard children pitch their tents,
Murmur "Napoleon ;" but, alas ! the sound
Is as an echo that with no refrain,
No loving echo in a living voice,
Dies a cold death among the mountain snow.

NAPOLEON.

Old man, I never looked for friendship there,
I never loved that England in my heart;
Tho' 'twas by such a sampler I believed
To weave our France's fortunes thriftily
With the gold tissues of prosperity.

BISHOP.

Ah, Sire, if I dare speak—

NAPOLEON.

Speak on.

BISHOP.

Too much
Thine eyes to that cold isle of heretics

Turn'd from thy throne for use and precedent;
Too little did they look, and that too late,
On that strong rock whereon the Lord thy God
Hath built His Holy Church.

NAPOLEON.

Something of this
I have heard in happier seasons.

BISHOP.

Hear it now
In the dark day of thine adversity.
O Sire, by him who holds the blessed Keys,
Christ's Vicar on the earth for blinded men,
I do conjure thee, hearken—with my mouth,
Tho' I am weak and low, the Holy Church
Cries to her erring son!

NAPOLEON.

Well, well, he hears.

BISHOP.

Thou smilest, Sire. With such a smile, so grim,
So bitter, didst thou mock our blessed cause
In thy prosperity.

NAPOLEON.

False, Bishop, false!
I made a bloody circle with my sword
Round the old Father's head, and so secured him
Safe on his tottering Seat against the world,
When all the world cried that his time was come.

What then? He totter'd on. I could not prop
His Seat up with my sword, that Seat being built,
Not on a rock, but sand.

BISHOP.

The world is sick
And old indeed, when lips like thine blaspheme.
Whisper such words out on the common air,
And, as a child,
Blow thy last hopes away.

NAPOLEON.

Hopes, hopes! What hopes?
What knowest thou of hopes?

BISHOP.

*Thy* throne was rear'd
(Nay hear me, Sire, in patience to the end)
Not on the vulgar, unsubstantial air
Which men call Freedom, not on half consent
Of unbelievers—tho', alas! thou hast stoop'd
To smile on unbelievers—not on lives
That saw in thee one of the good and wise,
Not wholly on the watchword of thy name;
But first on this—the swords thy gold could buy,
And most and last, upon the help of those
Who to remotest corners of our land
Watch o'er the souls of men, sit at their hearths,
Lend their solemnity to birth and death,
Guide as they list the motions of the mind,
And as they list with darkness or with light

Appease the spiritual hunger. Where
Had France been, and thou, boasted Sun of
France,
For nineteen harvests, save for those who
crept
Thine agents into every cottage door,
Slowly distilling thro' each vein of France
The vital blood of empire? Like to slaves
These served thee, used thy glory for a charm,
Hung up thine image in the peasant's room
Beside our blessed saints, and cunningly,
As shepherds drive their sheep unto the fold,
Gather'd thy crying people where thy hand
Might choose them out for very butchery.
Nay, more; as fearful men may stamp out
fire,
They in the spirits of thy people killed
The sparks of peril left from those dark
days,

When France, being drunk with blood and mad with pain,
Sprang on the burning pyre, and all her raiment
Burning and streaming crimson in the wind,
Curst and denied her God. They made men see,
Yea in the very name of Liberty,
A net of Satan's set to snare the soul
From Christ and Christ's salvation: in their palms
They welded the soft clay of popular thought
To this wish'd semblance yet more cunningly;
Till not a peasant heir of his own fields,
And not a citizen that own'd a house,
And not a man or woman who had saved,
But when some wild voice shriek'd out "Liberty!"
Trembled as if the robber's foot were set
Already on his threshold, and in fear

Clutch'd at his little store. These things did they,
Christ's servants serving thee; they were as veins
Of iron binding France to thee, its heart,
Throbbing full glorious in the capital.
And thou, O Sire, in thine own secret mind
Knowest what meed thou hast accorded them,
Who, thy sworn liegemen in thy triumph-hour,
Are still thy props in thy calamity.

NAPOLEON.

Well; have you done?

BISHOP.

Not yet.

NAPOLEON.

What more?

BISHOP.

Look round
This day on Europe, look upon the World,
Which, like a dark tree o'er the river of Time,
Hangeth with fruit of races, goodly some,
Some rotten to the core. Out of the heart
Of what had seem'd the sunset of the west,
Rises the Teuton, silent, subtle, and sure,
Gathering his venom slowly like a snake,
Wrapping the sleepy lands in fold by fold;
Then springing up to stab his prey with fangs
Numerous as spears of wheat in harvest time.
O, he is wise, the Teuton, he is deep
As Satan's self in perilous human lore,

Such as the purblind deem philosophy!
But, be he cunning as the tempter was,
Christ yet shall bruise his head; for in himself
He bears, as serpents use,
A brood of lesser snakes, cunning things too,
But lesser, and of these many prepare
Such peril as in his most glorious hour
May strike him feebler than the wretched worms
That crawl this day on the dead lambs of France.
Meantime, he to his purpose moveth slow,
And overcomes. Note how, upon her rock,
The sea-beast Albion, swollen with idle years
Of basking in the prosperous sunshine, rolls
Her fearful eyes, and murmurs. See how wildly
The merciless Russian paceth like a bear

His lonely steppes of snow, and with deep moan
Calling his hideous young, casts famished eyes
On that worn Paralytic in the East
Whom thou of old didst save. Call thou to these
For succour; shall they stir? Will the sea-beast
Budge from her rock? Will the bear leave his wilds?
Then mark how feebly in the wintry cold
Old Austria ruffles up her plumage, Sire,
Covering the half-heal'd wound upon her neck;
See how on Spain her home-bred vermin feed,
As did the worms on Herod; Italy
Is as a dove-cote by a battle-field,
Abandoned to the kites of infamy;
Belgium, Denmark, and Helvetia,

Like plovers watching while the wind-hover
Strikes down one of their miserable kind,
Wheeling upon the wind, cry to each other;
And far away the Eagle of the West,
Poised in the lull of her own hurricane,
Sits watching thee with eyes as blank of love
As those grey seas that break beneath her feet.

NAPOLEON.

This is cold comfort, yet I am patient. Well?
To the issue! Dost thou keep behind the salve
Whose touch shall heal my wounds? or dost thou only,
As any raven on occasion can,
Croak out the stale truth, that the day is lost,
And that the world's slaves knee the conqueror?

BISHOP.

Look not on these, thy crownéd peers, for aid,
But inward. Read thy heart.

NAPOLEON.

It is a book
I have studied somewhat deeply.

BISHOP.

In thine heart,
Tho' the cold lips might sneer, the dark brow frown,
Wert thou not ever one believing God?

NAPOLEON.

I have believed, and do believe, in God.

BISHOP.

For that, give thanks to God. He shall uplift thee.

NAPOLEON.

How?

BISHOP.

By the secret hands of His great Church.
Even now in darkness and in scenes remote
They labour in thy service; one by one
They gather up the fallen reins of power
And keep them for thy grasp; so be thou sure,
When thou hast gather'd round about thy soul
The Robe of Holiness, and from the hands
Of Holy Church demandest thy lost throne,
It shall be hers to give thee.

NAPOLEON.

In good truth,
I scarce conceive thee. What, degenerate Rome,
With scarce the power in this strong wind of war
To hold her ragged gauds about her limbs;
Rome, reft of the deep thunder in her voice,
The dark curse in her eye; Rome, old, dumb, blind,—
Shall Rome give Kingdoms?—Why, she hath already
Transferred her own to Heaven.

BISHOP.

Canst thou follow
The coming and the going of the wind,
Fathom the dark abysses of the sea?

For such as these, is Rome:—the voice of God
Sounding in darkness and a silent place;
The morning dew scarce seen upon the flowers,
Yet drawn to heaven and grown the thunderbolt
That strikes a King at noon. When man's wild soul
Clutches no more at the white feet of Christ;
When death is not, nor spiritual disease;
When atheists can on the dark mountain tops
Walk solitary in the light of stars,
And cry, "God is not;" when no mothers kneel
Moaning on graves of children; when no flashes
Trouble the melancholy dark of dream;
When prayer is hush'd, when the Wise Book is shut—

Then Rome shall fall indeed: meantime she
is based
Invulnerable on the soul of man,
Its darkest needs and fears; she doth dispense
What soon or late is better prized than gold,—
Comfort and intercession; for all sin
She hath the swiftest shrift, wherefore her
clients
Are those that have sinned deeply, and of such
Is half the dreadful world; all these she holds
By that cold eyeball which has read their
souls,
So that they look upon her secretly
And tremble,—while in her dark book of Fate
E'en now she dooms the Teuton.

*Enter a* MESSENGER.

NAPOLEON.

Well, what news?

MESSENGER.

'Tis brief and sad. The mighty Prussian chiefs,
Gathering their fiery van in silence, close
Toward the imperial City—in whose walls
Treason and Rage and Fear contend together
Like hunger-stricken wolves; and at their cry,
Echoed from Paris to the Vosges, France,
Calling her famish'd children round her knees,
Implores the trembling nations. All is still,
Like to that silence which precedes the storm,
And shakes the forest leaves without a breath;
But surely as the vaporous storm is woven,
The German closes round the heart of France
His hurricane of lives.

NAPOLEON (*to* BISHOP).

The Teuton thrives
Under the doom we spake of. (*To* MESSENGER.) Well, speak on!

MESSENGER.

Meantime, like kine that see the gathering clouds,
And shelter 'neath the shade of rocks and trees,
Thy timorous people fly before the sound
Of the approaching footsteps, seeking woods
For shelter, snaring conies for their food,
And sleeping like the beasts; some fare in caves,
Fearing the wholesome air, hushing the cries
Of infants lest the murderous foe should hear;

Some scatter west and south, their frighted eyes
Cast backward, with their wretched household goods;
And where these dwelt, most blest beneath thy rule,
The German legions thrive, let loose like swine
Amid the fields of harvest, in their track
Leaving the smoking ruin, and the church
Most desecrated to a sleeping-sty;—
So that the plenteous lands that rolled in gold
Round thine imperial city, lie full bare
To shame, to rapine, to calamity.

NAPOLEON.

O for one hour of empire, that with life
I might consume this sorrow! 'Tis a spell
By which we are subdued!

MESSENGER.

Strasbourg still stands,
Stubborn as granite, but the citadel
Has fallen. Within, Famine and Horror nest,
And rear their young on ruin. [*Exit.*

*Enter a* MESSENGER.

NAPOLEON.

How, peal on peal!
Like the agonizing clash of bells, when flame
Has seized on some fair city. News, more news?
Dost thou too catch the common trick o' the time,
And ring a melancholy peal?

MESSENGER.

My liege,
Strasbourg still stands.

NAPOLEON.

And then?

MESSENGER.

Pent up in Metz,
Encircled by a river of strong lives,
Bazaine is faithful to the cause and thee,
And from his prison doth proclaim himself,
And all the host of Frenchmen at his back,
Thy liegemen to the death.

NAPOLEON.

Why, that last peal
Sounds somewhat blither. Well?

MESSENGER.

From his lone isle,
The old Italian Red-shirt in his age

Has crawl'd, tho' sickly and infirm, to France,
And slowly there his leonine features breed
Hope in the timid people, who——

NAPOLEON.

Enough! [*Exit* MESSENGER.
That tune is flat and tame.
[*Enter a* MESSENGER.
What man art thou,
On whose swart face the frenzied lightning plays,
Prophetic of the thunder on the tongue?
Speak!

MESSENGER.

Better I had died at Weissemberg,
Where on the bloody field I lay for dead,

Than live to bring this woe. Ungenerous
France,
Forgetful of thy gracious years of reign,
Pitiless as a sated harlot is
When ruin overtaketh him whose hand
Hath loaded her with gems, shameless and
mad,
France, like Delilah, now betrays her lord.
The streets are drunken—from thy palace-gate
They pluck the imperial eagles, trampling
them
Into the bloody mire; thy flags and pennons,
Torn from their vantage in the wind, are
wrapt
In mockery round the beggar's ragged limbs;
And thine imperial images in stone,
Dash'd from their lofty places, strew the
ground
In shameful ruin. All the ragged shout,

While from the presidential seat Trochu
Proclaims the empire dead, and calleth up
A new Republic, in whose chairs of office
Thine enemies, scribblers and demagogues,
Simon, Gambetta, Favre, and with these
The miserable Rochefort, trembling grasp
The reins of power, unconscious of the scorn
That doth already doom them. To their feet
Come humming back, vain-drunken, all the wasps
That in thine hour of glory thou didst brush
With careless arm-sweep from thy festal cup:
Shoulder'd by mobs the pigmy Blanc declaims,
The hare-brain'd Hugo shrieks a maniac song
In concert, and the scribblers, brandishing
Their pens like valiant Lilliputians
Against the Teuton giant, frantically
Scream chorus. Coming with mock-humble eyes

To the Republic, this sham shape of straw,
This stuff'd thing of a harlot's carnival,
The dilettante sons of Orleans, kneeling,
Proffer forsooth their swords, which, being disdain'd,
They sheathe chopfallen, and with bows withdraw
Back to their pictures and perfumery.

NAPOLEON.

Why, thine is news indeed. Nor do I weep
For mine own wrong, but for the woes of France,
Whose knell thou soundest. With a tongue of fire
Our enemy shall like the ant-eater
Devour these insect rulers suddenly.

(*Aside*) Now, may the foul fiend blacken all
the air
Above these Frenchmen, with revolt and fear
Darken alike the wits of friends and foes,
With swift confusion and with anarchy
Disturb their fretful councils, till at last,
Many-tongued, wild-hair'd, mad, and horrible,
With fiery eyes and naked crimson limbs,
Upriseth the old Spectre of the Red,
And as of yore uplifts the shameful knife
To stab unhappy France; then, in her need,
Fearful and terror-stricken, France shall call
On him who gave her nineteen years of sleep—
And he may rise again. [*Exeunt.*

## CHORUS.

### STROPHE I.

First turning eastward thrice, and making the
mystic sign,

Wipe ye the bloody hair out of her beautiful eyne,
And cover up her face with the black fold of her dress:
Then, lastly, stooping slow, raise her with tenderness,
And follow where we lead with a melancholy tread,
Beating our baréd breasts to the deep chant of the dead;
Nor fail each man to crave in a deep voice and strong,
That God may smite those sore who did her this foul wrong;
Nor fail each man to pause and draw deep breaths of prayer,
And all for France, our murdered France, whom to the grave we bear.

### Anti-Strophe I.

Sons, ye are bloody-shod! Sons, ye breathe
bloody breath!
Your nostrils feel, O sons, the salt sharp
stench of death!
Your brethren rot afield, your children cry in
the dark;
Across your sisters' throats the butcher
leaves his mark;
With shameful finger-stains upon their bosom
bare,
Your dear ones lie and hide their faces in their
hair;
And yet I say this night, your pangs are light
and free
Beside her pangs whose dust ye carry after
me.

And yet I say this night, hush up your private wrong,
Gather your wrath, my sons, in one deep breath and strong—
Curse me the Teuton butchers! Curse me son, mother, and sire!
Call to the Lord for slaughter! call to the Lord for fire!
Scream me the thunders down! cry till the lightnings spring!
And all for France, our mother France, whom we are carrying.

### Strophe II.

Last night she was a Queen!—draw back the cloak, and lo!
The pale face set in hair threaded with silver snow,

The thin close-pressëd lips, the delicate silken
chin,
The round great eyes closed up, and dark,
all dark, within.
Come, touch her on the cheek; come, bless
her as she lies;
Come, kiss the dark lids down on the beloved
eyes;
Fall'n in her hour of pride, torn from her
triumph-car,
Is she not dearer still than all things earthly
are?
O France! O Mother! speak. O beautiful
Mother, wake!
Look on us, for we die:—we die for thy dear
sake:
The slayer is at our gates — weak are our
prayers and vain—
. . . Ah, God, she is not dead!—she stirs!
—her eyes unclose again!

### Anti-Strophe II.

Sons, gather round, gather round! Sons, be of cheer, be of cheer!

Beautiful, pale as snow, she stirs upon her bier.

Ah, but she is not dead! Mother, O Mother, speak!

She rises up her height—the bright blood burns in her cheek—

See how her great eyes gleam thro' tears of pain and shame—

See how the mighty lips tremble and quiver to flame.

She reacheth down to feel her sword, and it is there—

She holds it up to God; it gleams in the black air;

Sons, gather round, gather round! Sons, it
is not too late!
She turns her face to him who croucheth at
the gate—
In the wild wind of war her bloodstain'd gar-
ments wave—
With bitter, bleeding heart, our France springs
up as from the grave.

STROPHE III.

Set the cannon on the heights! and under
Let the black moat gape, the black graves
grow!
Now, let thunder
Answer back the thunder of the foe!
France has torn her cerements asunder—
France doth live, to strike the oppressor
low.

Now let the smithy blaze, and the blue steel
be sped;
Twist iron into guns, cast ye the fatal
lead;
Drag cannon to the gate,—and let our bravest
stand
Bare to the shoulder there, smoke-begrim'd,
torch in hand.
Now to the winds of heaven the Flag of
Stars upraise;
Let those sing martial songs who are too frail
for frays.
France is uprisen again! France, the sworn
slayer of Kings!
With bleeding breast and bitter heart, at the
Teuton's throat she springs.

ANTI-STROPHE III.

Dig the trenches broad and deep! and, after,
They shall serve for foemen's graves as well—
Let fierce laughter
Serve the German butchers for a knell.
Fire the paths they tread! Let floor and rafter
Blaze, till all our city is as Hell.
Now should they enter in, stand ye prepared with flame
To light the hidden mine under the city of shame.
Gather our children and wives, let them not watch or weep;
While we are striking home let them be praying deep.

They are famish'd, give them food—they are thirsty, let them drink:
Blood shall suffice for us, whether we rise or sink.
France is uprisen again!—how should we drink and eat,
Till, stiff in death, the Teuton snake is coil'd beneath her feet?

STROPHE IV.

Now like thunder
Be our voice together while we cry—
Kings shall never hold our spirits under,
Kings shall cast their crowns aside and fly.
Latin, Sclav, or Teuton, they shall wonder;
The soul of man hath doom'd them--let them die.

We have slain Kings of old—they were our
own to slay—
But now we doom all Kings until the Judg-
ment Day.
Raise ye the Flag of Stars! Tremble, O
kings, and behold!
Raise ye the Flag of Man, while the knell of
anarchs is toll'd!
This is a festal day for all the seed of Eve:
France shall redeem the world, and heal all
hearts that grieve;
France with her sword this day shall free all
human things;
With blood drain'd from her heart, our France
shall write the doom of Kings.

ANTI-STROPHE IV.

Fill each loophole with a man! and finding
Each a foe, aim slowly at the brain,

While the blinding
Lightnings flash, and the great guns refrain.
To the roofs! and while beneath the foe are winding
Dash ye stones and missiles down like rain.
Watch for the greybeard King: to drink his blood were great.
Watch for the Cub thereto—aim at his brain full straight.
Watch most for that foul Knave, who crawls behind the Crown,
Who smiles, befooling all, with crafty eyes cast down :
Sweeter than wine indeed his damnëd blood would flow,
Curst juggler with our souls, he who hath wrought this woe.

France hath uprisen again! Let the fierce
shaft be sped!
Till all the foul Satanic things that flatter
Kings be dead!

STROPHE V.

Send the light balloon aloft with singing,
Let our hopes rise with it to the sky!
Let our voices like one fount upspringing
Tell the mighty realm that hope is
nigh.
See, in answer, from the distance wing-
ing,
Back unto our feet the swift doves fly.
Read! read! yea, all is well,—yea, let our
hearts be higher;
North, south, east, west, the souls of French-
men are as fire.

Wildly from hill to hill the blessed tidings
speed!
Come from your fields, O sons! France is
arisen indeed.
The reaper leaves the wheat, the workman
leaves his loom.
Tho' the black priest may frown, who heeds
his look of gloom?
Flash the wild tidings forth! ring them from
town to town,—
Till like a storm of scythes we rise, and the
foe like wheat go down.

ANTI-STROPHE V.

See, how northward the wild heavens lighten!
Red as blood the fierce aurora waves;
Let it bathe us strong in blood, and brighten
Sweet with resurrection on our graves—
Lighten, lighten!

Scroll of God! unfold above and brighten!
Light the doom of monarchs and their slaves!
This is a day indeed—be sure that God can see.
Raise the fierce cry again, "Liberty! Liberty!"
Courage! no man dies twice, and he shall live in death,
Who for the Flag of Stars strikes with his latest breath.
Nay, not a foe shall live to tell if France be slain.
If the wild cause be lost, only the grave shall gain.
Teuton and Frank in fierce embrace shall strew the fatal sod;
And they shall live indeed who died to save their souls for God!

*Enter* NAPOLEON *and an* OFFICER.

OFFICER.

Once in a dream, being worn and weak, I saw
A fight between a hydra and a wolf,
In which the wily thing, with fold on fold
Of luminous coils enveloping its foe,
So that it could not breathe, nor stir, nor scream,
Struck not, but shooting out its hugest head,
Coiling it backward as I twist my arm,
Poised o'er the wolf's fierce face, and, with red fangs
Drawn and withdrawn to a horrid hissing sound,
Gazed stedfast with mesmeric orbs of fire
Into the fierce yet fascinated eyes

That watch'd them slowly closing up for doom.
E'en so it seem'd to stand of late with France
And her oppressor. But by God's own hand,
Or by some agency well deem'd divine,
The spell is shaken. Screaming in despair
The wolf strikes at the snake, and with strong feet
Forcing the fierce head to the ground, prepares
To spring upon and rend it, though around
The lesser heads, hissing like red-hot iron
Dashed into water, stab, and stab, and stab,
With thrusts repeated swift as one can breathe,
At the lean sides that run with bitterest blood,

While still the great heart throbbeth strong
and true,
And still the wild face, fearless even to death,
Gleameth by fits with rage and agony.

NAPOLEON.

Is there no hope for France?

OFFICER.

None. Yet I know not.
A nation thus miraculously strengthen'd,
And acting in the fiercest wrath of love,
Hath risen ere this above calamity,
And out of anguish conjured victory.
If strength and numbers, if the mighty hand
Of the Briareus, shall decide the day,
Then surely as the sun sets France must
fall;

If love or prayer can make a miracle
And bring an angel down to strike for her,
Then France may rise again.

NAPOLEON.

Have we not proved
Her children cowards? Yea, by God! Like dogs
That rend the air with wrath upon the chain,
And being loosen'd slink before the thief,
They fail'd me—those who led and those who follow'd;
Scarce knowing friend from foe, while inch by inch
The Germans ate their ranks as a slow fire
Devoureth wind-blown wheat. I cannot trust
In France or Frenchmen.

OFFICER.

Sire——

NAPOLEON.

Why dost thou hang
Thy head, old friend, and look upon the ground?
Nay, if all Frenchmen had but hearts like thine,
Then France were blest in sooth, and I, its master,
Were safe against the swords of all the world.

OFFICER.

Sire, 'twas not that I meant—my life is yours
To give or take, to blame or praise; I blush'd
Not for myself, but France.

NAPOLEON.

Then hadst thou cause
For crimson cheeks indeed.

OFFICER.

Sire, as I live,
Thou wrongest her! The breast whereon we grew
Suckled no cowards. For one dizzy hour
France totter'd, and look'd back; but now, indeed,
She hath arisen to the very height
Of her great peril.

NAPOLEON.

'Tis too late. She is lost.
She did betray her master, and shall die.

OFFICER.

Not France betrayed thee, Sire; but rather those
Whom thy most noble nature, royally based
Above suspicion and perfidious fear,
Welcom'd unto thy council; not poor France,
Whose bleeding wounds speak for her loud as tongues,
Bit at the hand that raised her up so high;
Not France, but bastard Frenchmen, doubly damn'd
Alike by her who bare them, and by thee
Who fed them. These betrayed thee to thy doom,
And falling clutch'd at thine imperial crown,
Dragging it with them to the bloody dust;
But these that held her arms like bands of lead

Being torn from off her, France, unchain'd
and free,
Uplifts her pale front to the stars, and stands
Serene in doom and danger, and sublime
In resurrection.

NAPOLEON.

How the popular taint
Corrupts the wholesome matter of thy mind!
This would be treason, friend, if we were
strong—
Now 'tis less perilous: the commonest wind
Can blow its scorn upon the fallen.

OFFICER.

Sire,
Behold me on my knees, tears in mine eyes,

And sorrow in my heart. My life is thine,
My life, my heart, my soul are pledged to thine;
And trebly now doth thy calamity
Hold me thy slave and servant. If I pray,
'Tis that thou mayst arise, and thou shalt rise;
And if I praise our common mother, France,
Who for the moment hath forgot her lord,
'Tis that my soul rejoices for thy sake,
That, when thou comest to thine own again,
Thy realm shall be a realm regenerate,
Baptised, a fair thing worthy of thy love,
In its own blood of direful victory.

NAPOLEON.

Say'st thou?—Rise!—Friend, thou art little skilled
In reading that abstruse astrology

Whereby our cunning politicians cast
The fate of Kings. France robed in victory,
Is France for ever lost to our great house.
France fallen, is France that with my secret hand
I may uplift again. But tell thy tale
Most freely: let thy soul beat its free wings
Before me as it lists. Come! as thou sayest,
France is no coward; — she hath at last arisen;
Nay, more—she is sublime. Proceed.

OFFICER.

My liege,
God, ere he made me thy most loving servant,
Made and baptised me, Frenchman; and my heart,
A soldier's heart, yearns out this day in pride

To her who bare me, and both great and low
My brethren. Courage is a virtue, Sire,
Even in a wretched cause. In Strasbourg still
Old Ulrich, with his weight of seventy years,
Starves unsubdued, while the dull enemy
Look on in wonder at such strength in woe;
Bazaine still keeps the glittering hosts at bay,
And holds them with a watchful hand and eye;
The captain of the citadel of Laon,
Soon as the foeman gather'd on his walls,
Illumed the hidden mine, and Frank and Teuton,
With that they strove for, strew'd the path in death;
From Paris to the Vosges, loud and wild,
The tocsin rings to arms, and on the fields

The fat ripe ear empties itself unreapt,
While every man whose hand can grasp a sword
Flocks to the petty standard of his town.
The many looms of the great factory
Stand silent, but the fiery moulds of clay
Are fashioning cannon, and the blinding wheels
Are sharpening steel. In every market-place
Peasant and prince are drilling side by side;
Roused from their wine-fed torpor, changed from swine
To men, the very country burghers arm,
Nay, what is more to them than blood, bleed gold
Bounteously, freely; I have heard that priests,

Doffing the holy cassock secretly,
Shouting uplift the sword, and crying Christ
To aid them strike for France. Only the basest,
Only the scum, shrink now; for even women,
Catching the noble fever of the time,
Buckle the war-belts round their lovers' waists,
And clapping hands, with mingled cries and sobs,
Urge young and old against the enemy.

NAPOLEON.

Of so much thunder may the lightning spring.
I know how France can thunder, and I have felt
How women's tongues can urge. But what of Paris?

What of Lutetia? How doth it bear
The terror and the agony?

OFFICER.

Most bravely,
As doth become the glorious heart of France:
Strong, fearless, throbbing with a martial
might,
Dispensing from its core the vital heat
Which filleth all the members of the land;
Tho' even now the sharp steel pricks the
skin,
To stab it in its strength.

NAPOLEON.

Who holds the reins
Within the gates?

OFFICER.

Trochu.

NAPOLEON.

Still? Why, how long
Have the poor fools been constant? Favre also?
Gambetta? Rochefort? All these gentlemen
Still flourish? And Thiers? Hath the arch-schemer
A seat among the gods, a place of rank
With the ephemera?

OFFICER.

Not so, my liege.

NAPOLEON.

Well, being seated on Olympus' top,
What thunderbolts are France's puny Joves

Casting abroad? Or do they sit and quake
For awe of their own voices, which in France,
As in the shifting glaciers of the Alps,
May bring the avalanche upon their heads?

OFFICER.

The men, to do them justice, use their power
Calmly and soldierly, and for a time
Forget the bitter humours of the senate
In the great common cause. Paris is strong,
And full of noble souls.

NAPOLEON.

Paris must fall.

OFFICER.

Not soon, my liege—for she is belted round
And arm'd impregnable on every side.

Hunger and thirst may slay her, not the sword;
And ere the foeman's foot is heard within,
Paris will spring upon her funeral pyre
And, boldly as an Indian widow, follow
Freedom, her spouse, to heaven. Last week I walk'd
Reading men's faces in the silent streets,
And, as I am a soldier, saw in none
Fear or capitulation: very harlots
Cried in their shame the name of Liberty,
And, hustled from the gates, shriek'd out a curse
Upon the coming German: all was still
And dreadful; but the citizens in silence
Drilled in the squares; on the great boulevard groups
Whisper'd together, with their faces pale
At white heat; in the silent theatre,

Dim lit by lamps, were women, wives and
mothers,
Silently working for their wounded sons
And husbands; in the churches, too, they sat
And wrought, while ever and anon a foot
Rung on the pavement, and with sad red eyes
They turn'd to see some armëd citizen
Kneel at his orisons or vespers. Nightly,
Ere the moon rose, the City slept like death;
Yet as a lion sleeps, with half-shut eyes,
Hearing each murmur on the weary wind,
Crouching and steady for the spring. Each
dawn
I saw the country carts come rumbling in,
And the scared country-folk, with large wild
eyes
And open mouths, who flock'd for shelter,
bringing
Horrible tidings of the enemy,

Who had devoured their fields and happy
homes.
Then suddenly like a low earthquake came
The rumour that the foe was at the gates;
And climbing a cathedral roof that night,
I saw the pitch-black distance sown with fire
Gleam phosphorescent like the midnight sea,
And heard at intervals mysterious sound,
Like far off tempest, or the Atlantic waves
Clashing on some great headland in a storm,
Come smother'd from afar. But, lingering yet,
I haunted the great City in disguise,
While silently the fatal rings were wound
Around about it by the Teuton hosts:
Still, as I am a soldier, saw no face
That look'd capitulation: rather saw
The knitted eyebrow and the clenchëd teeth,
The stealthy hand that fingered with the sword,
The eye that glanced as swift as hunger's doth

Towards the battlements. Then (for a voice
Was raised against my life) I sought Trochu,
Mine ancient schoolfellow and friend in arms,
And, though his brow darkened a moment's space,
He knew me faithful, and reached out his hand
To save me. By his secret help I found
A place in a balloon, that, in the dark
Ere daylight, rose upon a moaning wind,
And drifted southward with the drifting clouds;
And as the white and frosty daylight grew,
And opening crimson as a rose's leaves
The clouds to eastward parted, I beheld
The imperial City, gables, roofs, and spires,
White and fantastic as a city of dream,
Gleam orient, while the muffled drums within
Sounded réveille; then a flash and wreath
Of vapour broke across the outer line,

Where the black fortifications frowning rose
Ring above ring around the imperial gates,
And flash on flash succeeded with a sound
Most faint and lagging wearily behind.
Still all without the City seemed as husht
As sleep or death. But as the reddening day
Scattered the mists, the tiny villages
Loomed dim; and there were distant glimmerings,
And far-off muffled sounds: yet little there
Showed the innumerable enemy,
Who snugly housed and canopied with stone
Lay hidden in their strength; only the watch-fire
Gleam'd here and there, only from place to place
Masses of shadow seem'd to move, and light

Was glittered dimly back from hidden steel;
And, woefullest sight of all, miles to the west,
Along the dark line of the foe's advance,
On the straight rim where earth and heaven meet,
The forests blazed and to the driving clouds
Cast blood-red phantoms growing dim in day.
Meantime, like one whirl'd in a dizzy dream,
Onward we drove below the driving cloud,
And from the region of the burning fire
And smouldering hamlet rose still higher, and saw
The dim stars like to tapers burning out
Above the region of the nether storm,
And the illimitable ether growing
Silent and dark in the deep wintry dawn.

*Enter hastily a* MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

Most weighty news, my liege, from Italy.

NAPOLEON.

Yes?

MESSENGER.

Rome is taken. The imperial walls
Yawn where the cannon smote; in the red streets,
Romans embracing shout for Liberty;
From Florence to Messina bonfires blaze,
And rockets rise and vivas fill the air;
And with the thunder in his aged ears,
Surrounded by his cold-eyed cardinals,

Clutching his spiritual crown more close,
Trembling with dotage, sits the grey-haired
Pope,
Anathematizing in the Vatican. [*Exit.*

OFFICER.

Woe to the head on whom his curse shall fall,
For in the day of judgment it shall be
Better with Sodom and Gomorrah. Wait!
This is the twilight; red will rise the dawn.

NAPOLEON.

Peace, friend; yet if it ease thy heart, speak on.
I would to God, I did believe in God
As thou dost. Twilight surely—'tis indeed
A twilight — and therein from their fair
spheres

Kings shoot like stars. How many nights of late
The heavens have troubled been with fiery signs,
With characters like monstrous hieroglyphs,
And the aurora, brighter than the day
And red as blood, has burnt from west to east.

OFFICER.

I do believe the melancholy air
Is full of pain and portent.

NAPOLEON.

Would to God
I had more faith in God, for in this work
I fail to trace His hand; but rather feel

The nether-shock of earthquake everywhere
Shaking old thrones and new, those rear'd on rock
As well as those on sand. All darkens yet,
And in that darkness, while with cheeks of snow
The affrighted people gaze at one another,
The Teuton still, mouthing of Deity,
Works steadfastly to some mysterious end.
My heart was never Rome's so much as now,
Now, when she shares my cup of agony.
Agony! Is this agony? then, indeed,
All life is agony.

OFFICER.

Your Imperial Highness
Is suffering! Take comfort, Sire.

NAPOLEON.

It is nought—
Only a passing spasm at the heart—
'Tis my disease, comrade; 'tis my disease!
So leave me: it is late; and I would rest.

OFFICER.

God in his gracious goodness give thee health.

NAPOLEON.

Pray that He may; for am I deeply sick—
Too sick for surgery—too sick for drugs—
Too sick for man to heal. 'Tis a complaint
Incident to our house; and of the same
Mine imperial uncle died. [*Exit Officer.*
France in the dust,
With the dark Spectre of the Red above her!

Rome fallen! Aye me, well may the face of
heaven
Burn like a fiery scroll. Had I but eyes
To read whose name is written next for doom!
The Teuton's? O the Serpent, that has bided
His time so long, and now has stabbed so deep!
Would I might bruise his head before I die!
[*Exit.*

*Night.* NAPOLEON *sleeping. Chorus of* SPIRITS.

A VOICE.

What shapes are ye whose shades darken his
rest this night?

CHORUS.

Cold from the grave we come, out of the dark
to the light.

A Voice.

Voices ye have that moan, and eyes ye have that weep.
Ah, woe for him who feels such shadows round his sleep!

Chorus.

Tho' thou wert buried and dead, still would we seek and find thee,
Fly where thou wilt, thou shalt hear feet from the tomb behind thee.
Sleep? shall thy soul have sleep? Nay, but it shall be shaken.
Gather around him there, spirits of earth and air, trouble him till he awaken!

A Voice.

Who in imperial raiment, darkly frowning,
stand,
Laurel-leaves in their hair, sceptred, yet sword
in hand?

Another Voice.

Who in their shadow looms, woman-eyed,
woe-begone,
And bares his breast to show the piteous
wounds thereon?

Chorus.

Peace, they are kings; they are crown'd;
kings, tho' their realms have departed;
Realms of the grave they have, and they walk
in the same weary-hearted.

Sleep? Did their souls have sleep? Nay, for like his was their being.
Gather around him there, spirits of earth and air, wake him to hearing and seeing.

SPIRIT OF HORTENSE.

Woe! O ye shades unblest,
Leave ye my child to rest,
Leave me here weeping.
This night, at least, have grace,
See, the poor weary face
Child-like in sleeping.

SPIRIT OF CÆSAR.

Greater than thou, I fell: thy day is o'er.
Thou reap the world with swords! thou wear the robe I wore!

Back to thy books and read again how, in his
hour of pride,
At the foot of Pompey's statue, slain by slaves,
Imperial Cæsar died.

SPIRIT OF HORTENSE.

Woe! From his bed depart,
Ye who first taught his heart
Bloody ambition.
Back! he is God's in sleep:
Ah, in his heart burn deep
Pain and contrition.

SPIRIT OF BONAPARTE.

Greater than thou, I fell; die, and give place.
Thou take from my cold grave the glory and
the grace!

Thou rise victorious where I fell! Back to
thy books, thou blind!
Read how I watch'd the weary Sea, less vast
than my imperial mind.

NAPOLEON (*in sleep*).

Dost thou too frown, dark Spirit of our
house?
Scorn be thy meed for scorn. Thou hadst
become
A theme for nameless bards, a lullaby
For country folk to rock their cradles with,
A sound, a voice, an echo of a name
Dying most melancholy. In my mouth
Thy name became a trumpet once again,
And woods and wilds, to earth's remotest
peaks,
Echoed "Napoleon." Cursed be the name,

Cursed be thou, this day! . . . O mother! mother!

SPIRIT OF HORTENSE.

Father in Heaven, they rise!—
Spirits with dreadful eyes
Hither are creeping.
Thrice on his brow I write
Thy blessed Cross this night,
Moaning and weeping.

A VOICE.

What spirit art thou, with cold still smile and face like snow?

SPIRIT.

Orsini; and avenged. Too soon I struck the blow.

A Voice.

And thou, with bloody breast, and eyes that roll in pain?

Spirit.

I am that Maximilian, miserably slain.

A Voice.

And ye, O shadowy things, featureless, wild, and stark?

Chorus.

We are the nameless ones whom he hath slain in the dark!

A Voice.

Ye whom this man hath doom'd, Spirits, are ye all there?

Chorus.

Not yet; we come, we come—we darken all the air.

A Voice.

O latest come, and what are ye? Why do ye moan and call?

Chorus.

O hush! O hush! we come to speak the bitterest curse of all.

Hortense.

Woe!—for the spirits wild,
Woman and man and child,

Hither are creeping.
Thrice on his brow I write
Thy blessed Cross this night,
Moaning and weeping.

CHORUS.

Ours is the bitterest curse of all;—for we
Are Souls that perish'd, foully slain by thee.
Ah! would that thou hadst slain our bodies too, like theirs!
We ate of shame and sorrow till we ceased,
We drank all poisonous things at thy foul feast—
Back from the grave we come, with curses deep, not prayers.

With Sin and Death our mothers' milk was sour,
The womb wherein we grew from hour to hour

Gather'd pollution dark from the polluted
frame—
Beside our cradles naked Infamy
Caroused, and Lust sat smiling hideously—
We grew like evil weeds apace, and knew not
shame.

With incantations and with spells most
rank,
The fount of Knowledge where we might
have drank,
And learnt to love the taste, was hidden from
our eyes;
And if we learn'd to spell out written
speech,
Thy slaves were by, and we had books to
teach
Falsehood and Filth and Sin, Blasphemies,
Scoffs, and Lies.

We drank of poison, ev'n as flowers drink
dew;
We ate and drank of poison till we grew
Noxious, polluted, black, like that whereon
we fed;
We never felt the light and the free wind—
Sunless we grew, and deaf, and dumb, and
blind—
How should we dream of God, souls that were
slain and dead?

Love, with her sister Reverence, passed
our way
As angels pass, unseen, but did not stay—
We had no happy homes wherein to bid them
dwell;
We turn'd from God's blue heaven with
eyes of beast,

We heard alike the atheist and the priest,
And both these lied alike to smooth our
hearts for Hell.

Of some, both Soul and Body died; of
most,
The Body fatten'd on, while the poor ghost,
Prison'd from the sweet day, was withering
in woe;
Some robed in purple quaff'd their fatal
cup,
Some out of rubied goblets drank it up—
We did not know God was; but now, O God,
we know.

Ah woe, ah woe, for those thy sceptre
swayed,
Woe most for those whose bodies, fair
arrayed,

Insolent, sat at ease, smiled at thy feet of pride;
Woe for the harlots, with their painted bliss!
Woe for the red wine-oozing lips they kiss!
Woe for the Bodies that lived, woe for the Souls that died!

Lambs of thy flock, but oh! not white and fair;
Beasts of the field, tamed to thy hand, we were;
Not men and women—nay, not heirs to light and truth:
Some fattening, ate and fed; some lay at ease;
Some fell and linger'd of a long disease;
But all look'd on the ground—beasts of the field forsooth.

It is too late—it is too late this night—
To bid us live again in the fair light;
Back from the grave we come, with curses deep, not prayers.
Ours is a darker doom than theirs, who died
Strewing with blood the pathway of thy pride—
Ah, would that thou hadst slain our bodies too, like theirs!

SEMI-CHORUS I.

Tho' thou wert buried and dead, still would they seek thee and find thee.
Fly where thou wilt thou shalt hear feet from the grave behind thee.

HORTENSE.

Woe! woe! woe!

SEMI-CHORUS II.

Ye who beheld dim light thro' the chink of the dungeon gleaming,
And watch'd your shade on the wall, till it took a sad friend's seeming;
Ye who in dark disguise fled from the doom and the danger,
And dragging a patriot's chain died in the land of the stranger.
Men whom he set aside to die like beasts in the traces!
Women he set aside for the trade of polluting embraces!
Say, shall his soul have sleep? or shall it be darken'd and shaken?

CHORUS.

Gather around him there, spirits of earth and air, trouble him till he awaken.

NAPOLEON (*awakening*).

Who's there? Who speaks?—All silent. O
how slowly
Moveth the dark and melancholy night.
I cannot rest—I am too sick at heart—
I have had ill dreams. The inevitable
Eyes
Are watching, and the weary void of sleep
Has voices strangely sad.

[*He rises, and paces the chamber.*

O those dark years
Of Empire! He who tames the tiger, and
lies
Pillow'd upon its neck in a lone cave,
Is safer. Who could sleep on such a bed?
Mine eyes were ever dry of the sweet dew

God scatters on the lids of happy men;
Watching with fascinated gaze the orbs,
Ring within ring of blank and bestial light,
Where the wild fury slept: seeking all arts
To soothe the savage instinct in its throes
Of passionate unrest; with one hand holding
Sweet things within my palm for it to lap,
And with the other, held behind my back,
Clutching the secret steel: oft, lest the thing
Should fasten on its master, cunningly
Turning its wrath against the shapes that moved
Outside its splendid lair; until at last,
Let forth to the mad light of War, it sprang
Shrieking, and sought to rend me. O thou beast!
Art thou so wild this day? and dost thou thirst
To fix on thine imperial ruler's throat?

Why, I have bidden thee "down," and thou
hast crouch'd,
Tamely as any hound! Thou shalt crouch yet,
And bleed with shamefuller stripes!

Let me be calm,
Not bitter. 'Tis too late for bitterness.
Yet I could gnaw my heart to think how
France
Hath fail'd me! nay, not France, but rather
those
Whom to high offices and noble seats
In France's name I raised. I bought their
souls—
What soul can power not buy?—and, having
lost
The blessed measure of all human truth,
Being soulless, these betrayed me; yea,
became

A brood of lesser tigers, hungering
With their large eyes on mine. I did not build
My throne on sand; no, no,—on Lies and Liars,
Weaker than sand a thousandfold! In this
I did not work for evil. Though my means
Were dark and vile perchance, the end I sought
Was France's weal, and underneath my care
She grew as tame as any fatted calf.
I never did believe in that stale cry
Raised by the newsman and the demagogue,
Tho' for mine ends I could cry "Liberty!"
As loud as any man. The draff of men
Are as mere sheep and kine, with heads held down
Grazing, or resting blankly ruminant.

These must be tended, must be shepherded.
But Frenchmen are as wild things scarcely tamed,
Brute-like yet fierce, mad too with some few hours
Of rushing freely with an angry roar.
These must be awed and driven. By a scourge
Dripping with sanguine drops of their own blood,
I awed them : then I drove them : then in time
I tamed them. Fool! deeming them wholly mine,
I sought to snatch a little brief repose ;
But with a groan they found me, and I woke ;
And, since they seem'd to suffer pain, I said,
"Loosen the yoke a little," and 'twas done,
And they could raise their heads and gaze at me ;

And the wild hunger deepen'd in their eyes,
While fascinated on my throne I sat,
Forcing a melancholy smile of peace.
O had I held the scourge in my right hand!
Tighten'd the yoke instead of loosening!
It had not been so ill with me as now.
But Pity found me with her sister Fear,
And lured me. He who sitteth on a throne
Should have no counsellers who come in tears;
But rather that still voice within his brain,
Imperturbable as his own cold eyes,
And viewless as his coldly flowing blood;
Rather a heart as strong as the great heart
Driving the hot blood thro' a lion's thews;
Rather a will that moves to its desire
As steadfast as the silent-footed cloud.
What peevish humour did my mother mix
With that important ichor of our race

Which, unpolluted, filled mine uncle's veins?
He lash'd the world's Kings to his triumph-car,
And sat like marble while the fiery wheels
Dript blood beneath him: tho' the live earth shriek'd
Below him, he was calm, and, like a god,
Cold to the eloquence of human tears,
Cold to the quick, cold as the light of stars,
Cold as the hand of Death on the damp brow,
Cold as Death brooding on a battle-field
In the white after-dawn,—from west to east,
Royal he moved as the red wintry sun.
He never flatter'd Folly at his feet;
He never sought to syrup Infamy;
He, when the martyrs curst him, drew around him
The purple of his glory, and passed on

Indifferently, like Olympian Jove.
There was no weak place in the steel he wore,
Where woman's tongues might reach his mighty heart
As they have reach'd at mine. O had I kept
A heart of steel, a heart of adamant;
Had I been deaf to clamour and the peal
Of peevish fools; had I for one strong hour
Conjured mine uncle's soul to mix with mine,
Sedan had never slain me! I am lost
By the damn'd implements mine own hands wrought—
Things that were made as slavish tools of peace,
Never as glittering weapons meet for war.
He never stoop'd to use such peaceful tools!
But, for all uses,

Made the sword serve him—yea, for sceptre
and scythe;
Nay more, for Scripture and for counsellor.

Yet he too fell. Early or late, all fall.
No fruit can hang for ever on the tree.
Daily the tyrant and the martyr meet
Naked at Death's door, with the fatal mark,
Both brows being branded. Doth the world
then slay
Only its anarchs? Doth the lightning flash
Smite Cæsar and spare Brutus? Nay, by
heaven!
Rather the world keeps for its paracletes
Torture more subtle and more piteous doom
Than it dispenses to its torturers.
Tiberius, with his foot on the world's neck,
Smileth his cruel smile and groweth gray,
Half dead already with the weight of years,

Drinketh the death he is too frail to feel,
While in his noon of life the Man Divine
Hath died in anguish at Jerusalem.
[*He opens a Life of Jesus and reads. A long pause.*

Here too the Teuton works, crafty and slow,
Anatomizing, gauging, questioning,
Till that fair Presence which redeem'd the world
Dwindles into a phantom and a name.
Shall he slay Kings, and spare the King of Kings?
In her fierce madness, France denied her God;
But the still Teuton doth destroy his God,
Coldly as he outwits an enemy.
Yet doth he keep the name upon his lips,
And, coldly dedicating the dull deed
To the abstraction he hath christen'd God,
To the creation of his cogent brain,

Conjures against the blessed Nazarene,
That pallid apparition masculine,
That shining orb hemm'd in with clouds of flesh;
Till, darken'd with the woe of his own words,
The fool can turn to Wilhelm's wooden face
And Bismarck's crafty eyes, and see therein
Human regeneration, or at least
The Teuton's triumph mightier than Christ's.
Lie there, Iconoclast! Thou art thrice a fool,
Who, having nought to set within its place
But civic doctrine and a naked sword,
Would tear from out its niche the piteous bust
Of Him whose face was Freedom's morning star.

[*Takes up a second Book, and reads.*

Mark, now, how speciously Theology,
Leaving the broken fragments of the Life

Where the dull Teuton's hand hath scatter'd
them,
Takes up the cause in her high fields of air.
"Darkness had lain upon the earth like blood,
And in the darkness human things had
shriek'd
And felt for God's soft hand, and agonised.
But, overhead, the awful Spirit heard
Yet stirred not, on His throne. Then lastly,
One
Dropt like a meteor stone from suns afar,
And stirred and stretch'd out hands, and lived,
and knew
That He indeed had dropt from suns afar,
That He had fallen from the Father's breast,
Where He had slumber'd for eternities;
Hither in likeness of a man He came—
He, Jesus, wander'd forth from heaven and
said,

"'Lo, I, the deathless one, will live and die!
Evil must suffer—Good ordains to suffer—
Our point of contact shall be suffering,
There will we meet, and ye will hear my voice;
And my low voice shall echo on thro' time,
And one salvation, proved in bloody tears,
Be the salvation of humanity.'"

Ah, old Theology, thou strikest home!
"Evil *must* suffer—Good *ordains* to suffer"—
Says't thou? Did He then quaff His cup of tears
Freely, who might have dash'd it down, and ruled?
The world was ready with an earthly crown,
And yet He wore it not. Ah, He was wise!
Had He but sat upon a human throne,
With all the kingdom's beggars at His feet,

And all its coffers open at His side,
He had died more shameful death, yea, He had fallen
Even as the Cæsars. Rule the world with Love?
Tame savage human nature with a kiss?
Turn royal cheeks for the brute mob to smite?
He knew men better, and He drew aside,
Ordain'd to do and suffer, not to reign.

My good physician bade me search in books
For solace. Can I find it? Verily,
From every page of all man's hand hath writ
A dark face frowns, a voice moans "Vanity!"
There is one Book—one only—that for ever
Passeth the understanding and appeaseth
The miserable hunger of the heart—

Behold it—written with the light of stars
By God in the beginning.

[*Looks forth. A starry night.*

I believe
God is, but more I know not, save but this,
He passeth not as men and systems pass,
For while all change, the Law by which they change
Survives, and is for ever, being God.
Our sin, our loss, our misery, our death,
Are but the shadows of a dream: the hum
Within our ears, the motes within our eyes;
Death is to us a semblance and an end,
But is as nothing to that central Law
Whereby we cannot die.

Yonder blue dome,
Gleaming with meanings mystically wrought,
Hath been from the beginning, and shall be

Until the end. How many awe-struck eyes
Have look'd and spelt one word—the name of God,
And call'd it as they listed, Law, Fate, Change,
And marvell'd for its meaning till they died;
And others came and stood upon their graves,
And read the same, and marvelling too, gave place.
The Kings of Israel watch'd it with wild orbs,
Madden'd, and cried the Name, and drew the sword.
Above the tented plain of Troy it bent
After the sun of day had set in blood.
The superstitious Roman look'd by night
And trembled. All these faded phantom-like,
And lo! where it remaineth, watch'd with eyes
As sad as any of those this autumn night,—

The Higher Law writ with the light of Stars
By God in the beginning . . .
Let me sleep!
Or I shall gaze and gaze till I grow wild,
And never sleep again. Too much of God
Maketh the heart sick. Come then forth, thou charm,
Thou silent spell wrung from the blood-red flower,
With power to draw the curtains of the soul
And shut the inevitable Eyes away.
[*Drinks a sleeping draught and lies down.*

O mother, at thy knees I said a prayer—
Lead me not into temptation, and, O God,
Deliver me from evil. Is it too late
To murmur it this night? This night, O God,
Whate'er Thou art and whereso'er Thou art,

This night at least, when I am sick and fallen,
Deliver me from evil!

[*He sleeps.*

CHORUS OF CITIZENS.

O thou with features dire,
Who crouchest at our gates this bloody day,
With God's Name on thy forehead burnt in fire,
What art thou? Speak, and say!
What is thy kindred, monster? Who thy sire?
Whose word wilt thou obey?
God never made so black a thing as thou,
God never wrote that name upon thy brow;
Thou art too foul for God, to whom we pray.

Fatal thou broodest on our hearths, with eyes
Glazëd in hunger only blood can sate.
Begone!—within our breasts the sick heart dies
To see thee crouch and wait:
O blasphemy of nature, at our cries
God cometh soon or late.
Famine, and Thirst, and Horror at thy back
Lie moaning; Fire and Ruin mark thy track;
Begone, and die, thou thing of Sin and Hate!
Die now, ere once again
The sharp sob of the slain
Goes up the azure voids, and knocks at Heaven's Gate.

CHORUS.

Christ shall arise.
Power and its vanity,

Pride's black insanity,
Lust and its revelry,
Shall, with war's devilry,
Pass from humanity:
Christ shall arise.

SEMI-CHORUS I.

Kings shall pass like shadows from His whiteness,
Swords be turn'd to scythes and reap the wheat.

SEMI-CHORUS II.

Slaves that crawl'd round thrones shall fear His brightness,
Thrones shall be as dust around His feet.

CHORUS OF CITIZENS.

How long, O Lord, how long,
Shall we linger, frail and feeble as we are?
Thou art slow who shouldst be swift to right our wrong,
Thou wert promised in our very cradle song:
Thou hast come and gone above us like a Star!
'Tis a story of old times that Thou art strong;
But Thou comest not, Thou comest not from far:
And the cruel fall upon us in their throng,—
And we bleed beneath the tramping feet of War.

SEMI-CHORUS I.

Peace! He shall arise; be dumb and duteous;
Listen, hush your wild hearts, and be wise.

SEMI-CHORUS II.

Sin shall look and die: He is so beauteous;
Make your spirits pure to bear His eyes.

CHORUS OF THE DEAD.

Where we sleeping lie, where we sleeping lie,
We hear the sound, and our spirits cry;
As we sleeping lie in the Lord's own Breast,
Calm, so calm, for the place is blest,
We, who died that this might be,
Souls of the great, and wise, and free;

Souls that sung, and souls that sighed,
Souls that pointed to God and died;
Souls of martyrs, souls of the wise;
Souls of women with weeping eyes;
Souls whose graves like waves of the sea
  Cover the world from west to east;
Souls whose bodies ached painfully,
  Till they broke to prophetic moan and
    ceased;
Souls that sleep in the gentle night,
We hear the cry and we see the light.
Did we die in vain? did we die in vain?
Ah! that indeed were the bitterest pain!
But no, but no, 'twere a Father's guilt
If a drop of our blood was vainly spilt.
Not a life, nay, not a breath,
But killed some shape of terror and death;—
And we see the light and we bless the cry,
Where we sleeping lie, where we sleeping lie.

SEMI-CHORUS I.

Blest are ye who followed Him and feared not,
Yea, into the dark shadow of the tomb!

SEMI-CHORUS II.

Woe for those who saw ye and revered not;
Better they were formless in the womb!

CHORUS.

Christ shall arise.
Scorning all vanity,
Sweetness and sanity,
Meekness and lowliness,
Shall to love's holiness
Shepherd humanity.
Christ shall arise.

CHORUS OF CITIZENS.

He cometh late, this God!
Promised for countless years, He cometh late.
Where shall He dwell? The cities of our state
Are level with the sod.
Shall He upbuild them then? Meantime we wait,
And see black footsteps where our martyrs trod.
He cometh late, forsooth He cometh late,
This promised Lord our God!
Nor do we see the earth that He will claim,
Is riper yet than when He went away.
There are more ruins only, and the same
Are multiplied each day.
All lands are bloody, and a crimson flame
Eats Hope's poor heart away.

Where shall we turn for peace? whom shall
we trust for stay?
The anarchs of the world still sit and sway
The hearts of men to evil;—Hunger and
Thirst
Moan at the palace door; and birds of
prey
Still scream above the harvest as at first.
Should He then come at all,
This God on whom ye call,
How should He dwell on earth? would He
not find it curst?

SEMI-CHORUS I.

Nay, for the Lamb shall wrap the world in
whiteness;
Nay, for the wise shall make it fair and
sweet.

Slaves and fools shall perish in the brightness!
Thrones shall be as dust around His feet!

SEMI-CHORUS II.

Peace! ye make a useless lamentation.
Peace! ye wring your hands o'er things of stone.
Comfort! ye shall find a habitation
Fairer than the fairest overthrown.

FINAL CHORUS, OR EPODE.

Comfort, O true and free,
Soon shall there rise for ye
A CITY fairer far than all ye plan;
Built on a rock of strength,
It shall arise at length,
Stately and fair and vast, the CITY meet for man!

Towering to yonder skies,
Shall the fair City rise,
In the sweet dawning of a day more pure:
House, mart, and street and square,
Yea, and a Fane for prayer,
Fair, and yet built by hands, strong, for it shall endure.

In the fair City then,
Shall walk white-robëd men,
Wash'd in the river of peace that watereth it;
Woman with man shall meet
Freely in mart and street,
At the great council-board woman with man shall sit.

Hunger and Thirst and Sin
Shall never pass therein;

Fed with pure dews of love, children shall grow;
Nought shall be bought and sold,
Nought shall be given for gold,
All shall be bright as day, all shall be white as snow.

There, on the fields around,
All men shall till the ground,
Corn shall wave yellow, and bright rivers stream;
Daily, at set of sun,
All, when their work is done,
Shall watch the heavens yearn down and the strange starlight gleam.

In the fair City of men,
All shall be silent then,
While on a reverent lute, gentle and low,
Some holy Bard shall play

Ditties divine, and say
Whence those that hear have come, whither
in time they go.

No man of blood shall dare
Wear the white mantle there;
No man of lust shall walk in street or mart;
Yet shall the magdalen
Walk with the citizen;
Yet shall the sinner grow gracious and pure of
heart.

Now, while days come and go,
Doth the fair City grow,
Surely its stones are laid in sun and moon.
Wise men and pure prepare
Ever this City fair.
Comfort, O ye that weep: it shall arise full
soon.

When, stately, fair, and vast,
It doth uprise at last,
Who shall be King thereof, say, O ye wise?—
When the last blood is spilt,
When the fair City is built,
Unto the throne thereof, a Monarch shall arise.

Hearken, O pure and free,
When 'tis upbuilt for ye,
Out of the grave He shall arise again;
He whose blest soul did plan
This the fair CITY of MAN,
In his white robes of peace, CHRIST shall arise, and reign.

VIRTUE AND CO., PRINTERS, CITY ROAD, LONDON.

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# LONDON POEMS.

## By ROBERT BUCHANAN.

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"'London Poems' being, as their title denotes, the fruit of inspiration derived from those, to unpoetic souls, most hopelessly prosaic streets, which, to Mr. Buchanan and others like him, gifted with a sight beyond that of the eyes, are full of such poetry as may be vainly sought among the half-burnt ashes of the most glorious past. This poetry Mr. Buchanan can not only realise for himself, but draw out for the benefit of those less gifted with that keen and passionate insight. His versification, too, flowing and musical as it is, has just that touch of ruggedness about it which suits a theme the outward semblances of which have so little in common with the beauty of its inner reality; and possibly, were we asked

to point to any special token of his claim to a place in the front rank of poets, we could hardly do better than draw attention to the subtle instinct by which a stray word, or expression, or turn of a phrase, is made to temper the stately rhythm of the verse to the homely character of the theme, and that so delicately as never to jar the ear with the slightest hint of incongruity."—*Church and State Review.*

"He has the rare power of treating such subjects without making them too horrible, or, which is far worse, sweetening them till they are nauseous as well as shocking. He is quite aware that the transcript of misery and suffering may be too literal: thus he has given in his 'Edward Crowhurst' rather a softened than an exaggerated version of the actual history of poor John Clare. Occasionally he shows in his poems the critical side of his nature: the following remarkable verses prove that he has not studied Nature, either among hills or in cities, without pausing to contemplate the reflex action of his studies on his own mind. . . . Mr. Buchanan is always himself; never a mere imitator, too versatile to be genuine and original. He must be allowed a high rank among our living poets."—*Guardian.*

"To do this was a chivalrous thing for a poet. It is easy to speak grandly of the grander themes, but it is proverbially difficult to be dignified about the undignified topics. Wordsworth has often enough come to the verge of baby-talk in this direction. Buchanan has gone in the same direction, described realities, and made them touching and memorable. . . . It would be a good thing if this poem ('Liz') set men to simplify the marriage laws, and to make the expense of marriage nominal to the poorest."—*Evangelical Witness.*

"The 'London Poems' thus introduced are thoroughly original in conception, have much true dramatic power, and disclose a wonderful knowledge of the human heart. Some have the deepest pathos; some are cheerful and beautiful exceedingly; and one or two are almost overwhelming by their very simplicity and sad truth."—*Nonconformist.*

"Few writers so wholly unsensational, and whose poetry owes none of its popularity to the weird and wild obscurity of its thought nor to the glitter of its diction, have established a reputation equal to Mr. Buchanan in so short a time as that which has passed since his first acknowledged publication, 'Undertones,' took the reading and poetry-loving public by surprise. . . . The exquisite simplicity of these poems has rarely been surpassed. . . . Here, if anywhere, is, if we mistake not, true poetry, the outpourings of a heart instinct with love and sympathy for its fellows, which sees the image of its Maker in every human form, and recognises a brother's claim in every soul, however stained by sin, or burdened by the trials of life. A brave volume of poetry, the heart utterances stern and yet tender of a true poet."—*Churchman.*

"London Poems' will win him a world-wide fame, and lift him high into the ranks of British poets. It will possess an interest, too, drawn from the boldness of its design, which can only be enhanced by a perusal of its contents. . . . A rich production, based on simple materials. . . . As a poet combining simplicity with power, and a wonderful talent for giving to his subjects the form of reality and life, Mr. Buchanan is unsurpassed. Among contemporaneous or recent writers he is unequalled."—*Court Circular.*

"We may look upon his recent volume as conclusive evidence of the extent and nature of his power, and approach it from what point we will,

it is difficult to avoid being struck with the wealth that is displayed on every side. . . . Its contents are as noteworthy for gentleness and worth of moral, as for tenderness, delicacy, and poetical grace; and it is impossible to read the stories it contains without being struck with the poet's reverential love of nature, his admirable power of poetical expression, and his deep insight into the most secret corners of the human heart."—*Sunday Times.*

"What Wordsworth called 'the power of hills' is on him. . . . Even when, as in one or two of the poems, and perhaps the finest of them, the main subject of the poem is the emotion of the person supposed to be speaking—even then the emotion expressed is not self-respecting, and therefore hard and argumentative, as generally with Browning, but is all centred on some external object of love and solicitude. Thus the two poems called 'Liz' and 'Nell,' the finest perhaps in the volume, and, in their way, some of the finest poems of the present generation, are the expressions of the feelings of two poor London women, the one dying after the birth of her first child—born not in wedlock, but still in what the woman regarded as wedlock, with Joe, a costermonger; the other, such as the woman who lived with poor Wright (who was hanged for murder) might have spoken, had he been hanged for the murder of some one other than herself, instead of, as it happened to be in that case, that she herself was the victim of his habit of drinking. We do not mean, of course, that either of these beautiful poems,—poems unique in their mixture of city-life realism with lyrical beauty,—could actually have been spoken by the women whom they delineate. 'Art,' as Mr. Buchanan says, with a somewhat different drift, in the very fine poem called 'London, 1864,' 'works her end not by giving, but by cruelly taking away;' and she has taken away accordingly from the bizarre language in which these poor creatures would probably have endeavoured to clothe the thoughts that arose in them, all that hid, instead of really expressing, those thoughts, and left two poems such as we should not find it easy to match in any language, for making us see—

> 'Flowing beneath the blackness of the streets,
> The current of sublimer, sweeter life,
> Which is the source of human smiles and tears,
> And melodised, becomes the strength of song.'

"Mr. Buchanan takes as his motto Goethe's fine lines; and nobly, on the whole, does he work out the idea so often reiterated in our generation, so seldom successfully applied, at least in poetry. No volume of poems has appeared for many years in London, which so certainly announces a true poetic fame."—*Spectator.*

"The interest roused by these domestic dramas is never local and narrow, but rather human and broad. What appears to have struck Mr. Buchanan in the tragedy of London life, is the sin into which poor men and women fall from habit, from necessity, from affection—not from vicious desire; and to this error *in* the passions, which is seldom or never a misleading *of* the passions, he gives a singularly intense and tragic utterance . . . while he never tampers with the sin and shame, the poor human frailties get such hearing for themselves, before just and true men, as they might never gain from their own halting powers of speech. It surely is a gain for human nature when genius puts a new interpretation on the things which seem amiss. . . . This service of humanity against itself (so to say) is one of the highest ministries on earth."—*Athenæum.*

"One of the boldest experiments that has been attempted in modern poetry—the boldest certainly since Wordsworth dared to strike precedents

in the face, and sing of subjects which had been almost wholly neglected in a language which many of the critical oracles hated and despised. We suspect that Mr. Buchanan's experiment will be regarded as far more audacious than that of Wordsworth. . . . Most bravely has he sung, but has he sung well, truly, and beautifully? These are the questions to be solved; and those who have read his poems from the beginning will readily acknowledge that they contain a most satisfactory answer. . . . He enters the city, and, heedless of many warning voices which mutter of failure, he grapples with some of the most profoundly tragic phases of modern life—sinful, miserable, hopeless phases which the daintier muse would shudder even to name. But of all living poets Mr. Buchanan is, we think, the most courageous and uncowardly. In a moral point of view, indeed, his boldness amounts to a distinct originality. This, too, not merely because it is unique, but because it is allied to that kind of intense earnestness which springs from a deep sense of the value of human rectitude and human purity. . . . He seems to have got language and imagination thoroughly under the government of art. He has conquered conventionality, and can look life in all its phases straight in the face, without losing faith in human nature, or reverence for what is divine and holy. These are conquests which are indispensable to the poet, and which the highest poets alone can thoroughly make." . . . —*Glasgow Daily Herald.*

"They are in their subject so pathetic—so repelling, one might almost say; in their realism so pre-Raphaelite, and yet in their poetic treatment so delicately and tenderly artistic, that one cannot choose but wonder and admire and be sad over them. . . . There is a deep human interest at the heart of nearly all Mr. Buchanan's poems which would give them strength to live and move even if there were less of the genuine spirit of song in them than there actually is. This volume will make its mark. Once opened, it is not easily to be laid aside; once read, it is not to be forgotten."—*Morning Star.*

"'London Poems' we can neither analyse nor describe, simply for want of space. But the design of the poet—a most noble and beautiful design—becomes distinctly visible as soon as we have got over the first impression of wonder at the largeness of his intelligence, his power of dramatic individualisation (so to speak), the beneficent daring with which he paints, the generous humanity of his painting, and the originality of his music. . . . The writings of Mr. Buchanan, however, present to the most careful, as well as to the most superficial observation, every note or characteristic of the true poet; and when we observe how flexible and deep are his sympathies with all that is human (take 'Attorney Sneak,' 'Liz,' 'Nell,' and 'The Starling'), we may well slide into the use of the adjective 'alarming,' in speaking of such a poet. If this is only the 'spring' of the arch, what is its curve to be? We may well rejoice, meanwhile, in the prospect that we are to have a very great poet."—*Illustrated Times.*

"Mr. Buchanan, in his 'London Poems,' has won a nobler crown, watered with human tears. Every story that he tells appeals to the heart, and truth speaks in every line. To attempt to sing the wrong and suffering of the poor is nobler, we believe, than to tinkle Apollo's own lyre. But to sing them with successful power is an achievement indeed. Extracts can do no justice to the book; but we make a few quotations, rather for the sake of our readers, who may be attracted by such crumbs to a rich feast. One of the finest poems, 'Liz,' is full of gems. What a depth of sad philosophy there is in the words of the poor coster-girl, true to death to the man who is a husband to her! . . . 'Nell' is another voice of poverty

like 'Liz,' stirring the inmost heart. 'Langley Lane,' and the 'Linnet,' are charming city idyls; and 'Attorney Sneak,' and the 'Starling,' are fine satires—the last that strangest satire, a sorrowful one. The 'Little Milliner' is a pure, wholesome love-tale that is simply delicious. To sum the matter up, we assert—and such an assertion would not be inconsiderately printed in this journal—that Mr. Buchanan's 'London Poems' are worthy of a place in the heart with the 'Song of the Shirt' and the 'Bridge of Sighs.'"—*Fun*.

"These 'London Poems,' and the poems which have preceded them from the same pen, are notable contributions to the poetical literature of our age. Their author shows independence and originality, and has, besides, a high sense of his vocation, which reveals itself in the purpose and spirit of everything he writes. It is because they picture what is beautiful and what is terrible in the hard life which so many thousands of our neighbours have allotted to them, that we think so highly of these poems. It is no small thing to find one so gifted deliberately setting himself to the study of what most people think is almost wholly unlovable and making that the subject of song. The success attained is altogether deserved."—*Working Man*.

"The poet does noble work in the cause of suffering humanity, when out of all that is on the surface repulsive in poverty, and base and brutal in ignorance, he extracts the redeeming goodnesses, and shows the great human heart still at work where, to the sight of the dull surface spectator, there is savagery, and squalor, and moral death. There is no danger in such teachings as are conveyed to the world in the utterance of a true genius and a Christian soul, let them be of the basest, the lowest of God's creatures that ever breathed. . . . He will live, we trust, to hear thanks given to him from far and wide; for his stories of London byways are sweet, sad sermons (unlike most sermons formally preached from pulpits), that will touch the hearts of men and women, and call up generous tears and teach charity of thought to many who have been wont to pass by lanes and courts with averted face, deeming them only foul abiding-places of unmixed wickedness."—*Lloyd's Newspaper*.

"He has seen that underlying all that is dull and prosaic in ordinary London life, there is an element of the truest romance; that even amidst its scenes of degradation and wretchedness, there are played out dramas marked by the grandest passion, and full of the most tragic interest; and he has felt that the poet is fulfilling his own high mission when, by the portraiture of such scenes he awakens the feelings of the more favoured half of society on behalf of those whose sins they brand with severest reprobation, and whose sorrows they rarely seek to comprehend or relieve. This is the end which he has evidently sought in the exquisite poems which make up the greater part of this volume. They are beautiful in their conceptions of character and life, in the varied images by which they are studded, in the homage which they everywhere render to real goodness, but beautiful above all in the natural and tender pathos by which they are characterised throughout."—*Patriot*.

"However unrefined, his personages are never offensive, prosaic, or commonplace at the moment when he allows us to see them, whatever they may be at other times. Simple and few as may be his incidents, the poet generally selects them so that they shall be such as to extract from them the very essence and aroma of the characters brought into play; the tragic, pathetic, lovable, or pitiable elements lying down at the root of the simplest and most ordinary natures. And in the person of one whose perception is rendered sensible and delicate by deep sympathy or interest, he brings out

all the subtler features and manners of the situation with care and fineness of touch. . . . One more remark we must make—that the moral atmosphere of this book seems, to us, thoroughly healthy, though there is no preaching in it; and the morality is not pharisaic or merely conventional. But we rise from the perusal of it with larger, kindlier, less artificial, and more hopeful views of our common nature, because we have been looking at it through the eyes of one who sees deep and truly. . . . We record our conviction that if Mr. Buchanan writes no more he will have permanently enriched English literature by much that he has already accomplished."—*British Quarterly Review.*

"The realistic treatment is exacting in its demands down to the smallest details, and the temptation is to a spurious realism, to 'the truth that looks the truth' (to use a fine phrase of Mr. Buchanan's apart from its meaning). Mr. Buchanan seizes upon a form of life, and strives to reproduce it, as he sees it, with the sincerity which a great writer insists upon as the very life and soul of literature. The forms of life upon which he seizes are of course determined by his sympathies, and these have been profoundly stirred to pity and to indignation by the massive misery of London life. In 'Liz,' and 'Nell,' and 'Jane Lewson,' he seized upon three typical forms of that misery growing out of poverty, crime, and what may be called repression—a tearful and unestimated source of suffering always most dense in the crush of cities. But then, says the idealist, why does he so often seize on what is unlovely and painful? But has he not striven to wring out of them a nobler beauty, a higher delight? There are thousands of such lives as those of 'Liz' and 'Nell' in London. They are facts, and as such we cannot get rid of them. We must regard them somehow. We may take them hardly and coldly, frown at their sin, and remain unmoved at their misery, and call our callosity conscience: or, more degrading still, we may take them lightly and carelessly, and pass them by on the other side, with a smile and a shrug. . . . That he has phrased the truths of this life boldly and made them beautiful we feel profoundly." . . .—*Scotsman.*

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